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Sky Guide / Tracker 2020/2021

**Graduation Project Documentation**

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**Sky Guide / Tracker**

**A Project Submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the Degree of Bachelor of Science in Systems and Computers Engineering**

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**2020/2021**

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**ABSTRACT**

For most people, the night sky is a mystery because it’s really difficult to find a certain object in the night sky using the naked eye, however, in reality the night sky is a detailed map;

Just like the coordinates of any place on earth, each celestial object can be located using specific coordinates, our project aims to exploit this fact.

Sky Guide consists of two main parts that enable the user to find and track any object in the sky, these are:

* *Desktop application*:

We’ve established a moderate database, that contains a set of coordinates and information for some of the most famous celestial objects (stars, nebulas, etc); From the desktop application we access this database to retrieve the coordinates of the required object, and send it to the physical device.

* *Physical device:*

The device receives the coordinates of the required object -from the desktop application- and points toward it.

This project is targeting the amateur astronomers and the astrophotography community, and it can be used as a Telescope German Equatorial Go-To Mount.

KEYWORDS: Astronomy; Astrophotography; Telescope Mount;

**ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS**

***"Praise be to Allah, who guided us to this and we would never have been guided if Allah had not guided us."***

We would like to thank Dr. Khaled Al-Shafei for advice, encourage, support and mentoring has offered us during project also in the class.

We would like to thank our friend and colleague Eng. Mostafa Arafa from the department of mechanics, for helping us greatly in the design of the physical device.

Also, we would like to thank staff doctors and Engineers of facility members of the department of systems and computer engineer for their help and encouragement.

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**GLOSSARY AND LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS**

**CHAPTER 1**

**INTRODUCTION**

## Background and Motivation

The aim of the work described in the Report was to provide a software tool and a device controlled by this software, to find and track any celestial object;

// TO DO

## 1.2 Scientific Idea

Similar to the navigation on earth, where to find a position on earth, a one must know its coordinates -longitude and latitude, there must be a celestial coordinate system to enable us to navigate the sky, this introduces us to the concept of “Celestial sphere” & “Celestial coordinate systems”.

### 1.2.1 Celestial sphere

Celestial Sphere is an abstract sphere that has an infinite radius and shares the same center with the Earth. We imagine that the stars and planets are attached to the inside surface of the celestial sphere.

Standing outside on a clear moonless night far from city lights, it is easy to imagine that one is at the center of such a sphere and that the stars and planets are attached to its inside surface.

Extending the Earth's axis of rotation in both directions onto the celestial sphere determines two points, the north celestial pole and the south celestial pole, similarly, projecting the Earth's equator onto the celestial sphere determines the celestial equator.

As the Earth revolves around the Sun each year, we see the Sun seeming to travel across the celestial sphere. As it does, it traces out an imaginary great circle, which is called the ecliptic.

The plane determined by the Earth's equator is tilted with respect to the plane determined by the ecliptic, so the Sun is north of the equator for 6 months of each year and south of the equator for the other 6 months. The ecliptic and the equator cross at two points, the vernal equinox and the autumnal equinox. The vernal equinox is the point where the Sun crosses the equator on its way north each year, marking the first day of spring in the Northern Hemisphere. See illustration fig 1.1.

Chart, radar chart

Description automatically generated

Fig 1.1

### 1.2.2 Celestial coordinate systems

There are many celestial coordinate systems, for example:

Horizontal system, Galactic system, Ecliptic system and Equatorial system -which is used in this project.

*Equatorial coordinate system:*

As the distances to the stars and planets are so great, two different observers see the same star in the same direction and thus the star can be thought of as being at a specific “position” on the celestial sphere.

Using the two poles, the equator, and the ecliptic, it is straightforward to establish a coordinate system that makes it possible to determine the position of any object in the sky. The system is similar to the system of latitudes and longitudes used for the locations of objects on the surface of the Earth. Right ascension -abbreviated RA or with the Greek letter α- is analogous to longitude. Declination -abbreviated Dec or with the Greek letter δ- is analogous to latitude.

As with longitude on the Earth, it is necessary to choose a “zero” point for right ascension, we use on earth a meridian -a great semicircle from one pole to the other, perpendicular to the equator- passing through Greenwich, England. On the celestial sphere we use the meridian that passes through the vernal equinox. Every point on this prime meridian has a right ascension of zero.

Right ascension is measured in hours and minutes, ranging from 0 hours, 0 minutes to 23 hours, 59.999… minutes. Hours are used rather than degrees because the entire sphere seems to rotate once per day. Each hour of right ascension corresponds to 15°. Right ascension increases toward the east.

Declinations are measured north and south of the equator with angles between 0° and 90°, measured in degrees and minutes. Northern declinations are considered positive, southern declinations negative.

For example: If a star is located at RA = 4.1h and Dec = 58.8°, figure 1.2 illustrates the position of this star.

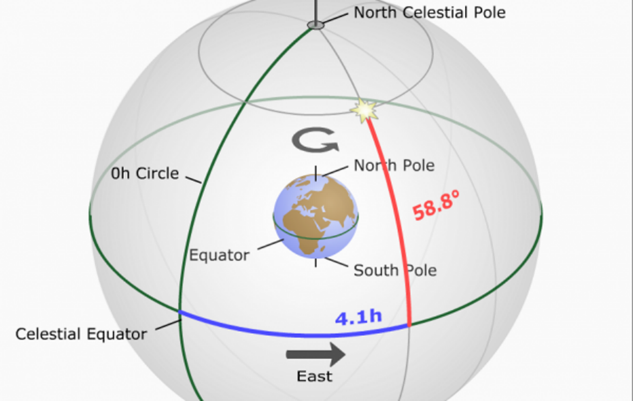
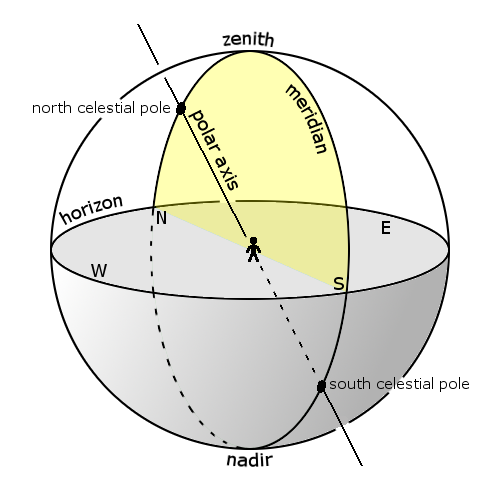


Fig 1.2

### 1.2.3 Local sidereal time

Sidereal time is a timekeeping system that is used to locate celestial objects, astronomers use Sidereal Time to measure the movement of the celestial sphere.



Local sidereal time (LST) is the sidereal time where the observer’s located, it is equal to the RA of any celestial object that is transiting the observer’s meridian -the great circle passing through the celestial poles, as well as the zenith and nadir of an observer's location (see Fig 1.3)- at this particular moment, for example the time when the vernal equinox passages over the observer this marks the zero hour of the local sidereal time. Fig 1.3

## 1.3 Problem definition

As the earth revolves around itself a full revolution per day, any celestial object seems to be moving across the sky -from the east towards the west, due to this fact, it’s very difficult to find the exact RA of a particular celestial object, and to track this object across the sky. So, for a given celestial object, we shall have its coordinates -RA and Dec- and it’s required to find this particular object and track it across the sky.

## 1.4 Survey

There are many companies develop smart mounts in order to solve these problems

Among these companies:

* Celestron:

Celestron is a company that manufactures and distributes telescopes and telescope mount.

Examples of their telescope mounts: CGX EQUATORIAL MOUNT, Advanced VX Go-To German EM.

* iOptron:

iOptron is a global company specializing in the development, manufacturing, and marketing of innovative astronomical telescopes, mounts & accessories, and cutting-edge optical instrument for multiple applications.

Examples of their telescope mounts: Urban 90, Versa AZ

* Orion:

Examples of their telescope mounts: Orion SpaceProbe II

Unfortunately, there aren’t any local companies that make similar device.

**CHAPTER 2**

**PROPOSED APPROACH**

## Introduction

To solve the problem discussed in the previous chapter, there were many challenges that faced us, some of these challenges are as follows:

* How to make the user select a particular celestial object?
* How to make the user input the coordinates of any celestial object?
* How to send these coordinates to the device to move towards the object?
* How to make the device receives coordinates of an object and moves towards it?
* How to make sure that the device reached its destination?
* How to make the device track the object across the sky?

To solve these challenges, we settled on the following approach.

## 2.2 Proposed approach

Our approach consists of two parts:

### 2.2.1 Software application

To solve the problem of enabling the user to select a particular celestial object, we have to store the positions and some information related to the most famous celestial objects in a database, which will be available for the user to access remotely through our desktop application.

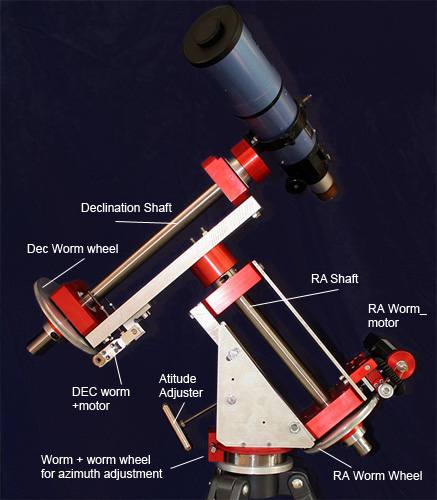
The desktop application will communicate with the hardware device through a wireless communication to send the positions selected by the user. Also, it will enable the user to perform the following actions on Sky Guide database:

* Search for a celestial object by name.
* Explore specific coordinates.
* Add a new celestial object to the database.

The following celestial objects are supported by Sky Guide database: constellations, stars, nebulas, supernova remnants and the most famous objects in our solar system.

Finally, the desktop application will have the responsibility of updating the coordinates of the celestial object, thus, enabling the hardware device to track it across the sky.

### 2.2.2 Hardware device

We wanted to make an actual telescope-camera mount to point the telescope or the camera to the specified celestial object, like the one in Fig 2.1.

Unfortunately, we are limited in the hardware resources and materials. So, we made a small prototype in which instead of controlling a telescope-camera we will control a laser which will be pointing at the celestial object.

Fig 2.1

The hardware device will communicate with the desktop application through a wireless communication to receive the required angles to which the laser will be pointing at.

**CHAPTER 3**

**SYSTEM DESIGN AND IMPLEMENTATION**

As mentioned previously, our project consists of two parts, software application and hardware device.

## 3.1 Software part

Sky Guide desktop application consists of three main parts, database, backend and frontend.

### 3.1.1 Database

The process of establishing Sky Guide database was done in three phases,

ERD, Data collection and uploading the database on clever cloud online server.

#### 3.1.1.1 Entity relationship diagram (ERD)

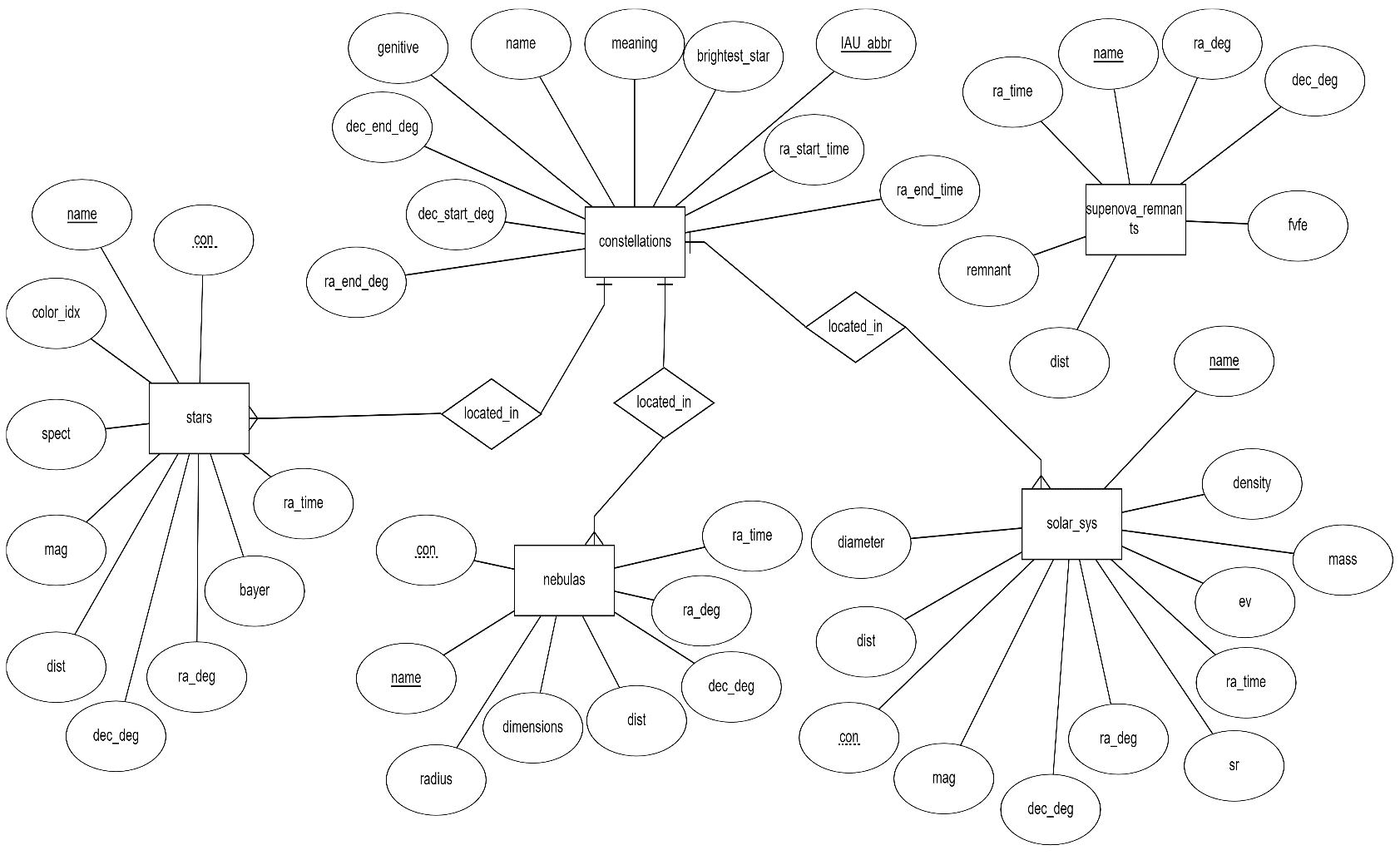


Fig 3.1

#### 3.1.1.2 Entities description

As shown in the previous diagram, Sky Guide database consists of five entities.

1. Constellations: this table contains information about all the known 88 constellations, the description of these attributes are as follows.

* *IAU\_abbr*: the IAU (International Astronomical Union) abbreviation, which is a three-litter abbreviation of any constellation.
* *name*: the Latin name of the constellation.
* *meaning*: the meaning of the constellation name.
* *genitive*: the name of the constellation which is used in its stars’ bayer names.
* *ra\_start\_time*: the RA position of the start point of the constellation in time notation (h m s).
* *ra\_end\_time*: the RA position of the end point of the constellation in time notation (h m s).
* *ra\_start\_deg*: the RA position of the start point of the constellation in degrees.
* *ra\_end\_deg*: the RA position of the end point of the constellation in degrees.
* *dec\_start\_deg*: the Dec position of the start point of the constellation in degrees.
* *dec\_end\_deg*: the Dec position of the end point of the constellation in degrees.
* *brightest\_star*: the brightest star in the constellation.

1. Supernova remnants: this table contains information about some of the most famous supernova remnants, the description of these attributes are as follows.

* *name*: the name of the supernova remnant.
* *ra\_time*: the RA position of the supernova remnant in time notation.
* *ra\_deg*: the RA position of the supernova remnant in degrees.
* *dec\_deg*: the Dec position of the supernova remnant in degrees.
* *dist*: the approximate distance between the earth and the supernova remnant in light years
* *remnant*: what it is remnant of.
* *fvfe*: first visible from earth.

1. Stars: this table contains information about some of the most famous stars, the description of these attributes are as follows.

* *name*: the name of the star.
* *ra\_time*: the RA position of the star in time notation.
* *ra\_deg*: the RA position of the star in degrees.
* *dec\_deg*: the Dec position of the star.
* *dist*: the distance between the star and the earth.
* *mag*: the apparent visual magnitude of the star.
* *spect*: the spectral type of the star, if known.
* *color\_idx*: the color index of the star, if known.
* *bayer*: the Bayer designation -a stellar designation in which the star is identified by a Greek or Latin letter followed by the genitive form of its parent constellation's Latin name.
* *con*: the IAU abbreviation of the parent constellation of the star.

1. Nebulas: this table contains information about some of the most famous nebulas, the description of these attributes are as follows.

* name: the name of the nebula.
* *ra\_time*: the RA position of the nebula in time notation.
* *ra\_deg*: the RA position of the nebula in degrees.
* *dec\_deg*: the Dec position of the nebula.
* *dist*: the distance between the nebula and the earth.
* dimensions: the apparent dimensions of the nebula.
* radius: the approximate radius of the nebula in light years
* con: the IAU abbreviation of the parent constellation of the nebula.

1. Solar system objects: this table contains information about some of solar system objects, the description of these attributes are as follows.

* *name*: the name of the solar system object.
* *ra\_time*: the RA position of the solar system object in time notation.
* *ra\_deg*: the RA position of the solar system object in degrees.
* *dec\_deg*: the Dec position of the solar system object.
* *dist*: the distance between the solar system object and the earth.
* *mag*: the apparent visual magnitude of the solar system object.
* *mass*: the mass of the solar system object in kilograms.
* *ev*: the required escape velocity of the solar system object in km/s
* *sr*: the solar system object sidereal rotation in hours.
* *diameter*: the solar system object diameter in Kilometers.
* *density*: the density of the solar system object in gr/cm^3.
* *con*: the IAU abbreviation of the parent constellation of the solar system object.

#### 3.1.1.3 Uploading on CleverCloud server

To make the database of Sky Guide accessible remotely, we uploaded it on an online MySQL server supported by clever cloud.

Clever Cloud is a Europe-based PaaS company, that help developers deploy and run their apps with bulletproof infrastructure, automatic scaling, fair pricing and other features. Among those features, free MySQL hosting, of course with some limitations.

### 3.1.2 Backend

In this section we’ll discuss Sky Guide desktop application backend, and some of the important points regarding the application.

#### 3.1.2.1 Programming language used

In the developing of Sky Guide application, we used Python-3.9 as the backend programming language, we chose Python because it’s a simple and powerful language, and recently we have studied it, and all of Sky Guide team are familiar and have some experience with it.

#### 3.1.2.2 Device connection

Sky Guide mount wireless communication with the application is done using a Bluetooth connection, we used a serial communication module called PySerial, to configure the app to communicate with the mount which will be connected to one of the OS Bluetooth COM ports.

Once the application starts, it tries to connect with the mount, and sends the appropriate angles to it, then it waits for the confirmation, if the confirmation wasn’t sent back, the app will disconnect, and retry to initiate the connection again, this process is done until the application is closed by the user.

#### 3.1.2.3 LST calculations

As the application is responsible to send the correct angels to the mount of the celestial object, it has to calculate the difference between the current LST and the object’s RA, and then sends an updated angel of this object’s RA to the mount, this is done continuously to ensure that the pointer find and follows the celestial object in the sky. The calculation of the local sidereal time was taken form “Astronomical algorithms 2nd edition” by Jean Meeus, chapter 12.

#### 3.1.2.3 UML diagram

#### 3.1.2.4 Application threads

Sky Guide application consists of three threads: main thread, internet checking thread and mount communication thread.

* Main thread: in this thread we communicate with Sky Guide database and exract the user’s required
* Internet checking thread: in this thread we keep checking the internet connection, as it’s necessary, in order to connect to Sky Guide database, if the connection is down, we blook any operation done on the database, and indicate to the user that the connection is down.

**CHAPTER 4**

**RESULTS AND DISCUSSION**

## Results

Results: you should assess the success of your project. How does it compare with the original specification? How reliable is it? How have you tested it? Comment on its robustness. This is done in the final documentation of the project.

## Discussion

Discussion: here you will summarize your achievements and also the deficiencies of your project. You can also say what you would or could have done, if you had had more time or if things had worked out differently. It is important to be completely honest about the deficiencies and inadequacies of your work, such as they are. Part of your aim is to demonstrate your ability to recognize problems that remain. This is done in GP2.

**CHAPTER 5**

**CONCLUSION AND FUTURE WORK**

## Conclusion

Give a brief statement of how the solution that you have provided addresses the problem stated in the introduction. Provide an evaluative statement based on the results. You should not introduce new material.

## Future Work

Future Work: here you will recommend what is needed to be done in the future to your work. This is done in GP2.

**REFERENCES**

Cerny, V. 1985.Thermodynamical Approach to the Traveling Salesman Problem: An Efficient Simulation Algorithm, *J. Opt. Theory Appl.*, volume 45, number1, pages.41-51.

References: for your Final Year project, it is required that you cite and reference work to which you owe an intellectual debt. It is required that you cite and reference work that provides supporting evidence. It is required that you cite and reference work so that the reader can find the sources that have been quoted.

In other words, the purposes of a reference are to acknowledge the contributions of other authors and to enable readers to locate source easily. In this section, you can use alphabetically or numerically system (e.g. APA style referencing).

**General guidelines:**

**APA Reference List Examples**

* **Book with Single Author:**

Gore, A. (2006). *An inconvenient truth: The planetary emergency of global warming and what we can do about it.* Emmaus, PA: Rodale.

**In-text reference:** (Gore, 2006)

* **Book with Two Authors:**

Michaels, P. J., & Balling, R. C., Jr. (2000).*The satanic gases: Clearing the air about global warming*. Washington, DC: Cato Institute.

**In-text reference:** (Michaels & Balling, 2000)

* **Book with Editor as Author:**

Galley. K. E. (Ed.). (2004). *Global climate change and wildlife in North America.*Bethesda, MD: Wildlife Society.

**In-text reference:** (Galley, 2004)

* **An Anonymous Book:**

*Environmental resource handbook*. (2001). Millerton, NY: Grey House.

**In-text reference:** (Environmental Resource Handbook, 2001)

* **Articles in Reference Books (unsigned and signed):**

Greenhouse effect.(2005). *American heritage science dictionary*. Boston, MA: Houghton Mifflin.

Schneider, S. H. (2000). Greenhouse effect.*World book encyclopedia* (Millennium ed. Vol. 8, pp. 382-383). Chicago, IL: World Book.

**In-text references:** (Greenhouse effect, 2005)

(Schneider, 2000)

* **Journal Article when each issue begins with p.1:**

Bogdonoff, S., & Rubin, J. (2007). The regional greenhouse gas initiative: Taking action in Maine. *Environment, 49*(2), 9-16.

**In-text reference:** (Bogdonoff& Rubin, 2007)

* **Website:**

United States Environmental Protection Agency. (2007, May 4). *Climate Change*. Retrieved From the Environmental Protection Agency website: http://www.epa.gov/climatechange

**In-text reference:** (United States Environmental, 2007)

Gelspan, R. (2007). *The Heat Is Online*. Lake Oswego, OR: Green House Network. Retrieved from The Heat Is Online website: http://www.heatisonline.org

In-text reference: (Gelspan, 2007)

**How to Cite an Website in APA**

**Structure:** Last, F. M. (Year, Month Date Published). Article title.*Website Title*.Retrieved Month Date, Year, from URL.

**Example:**

* Satalkar, B. (2010, July 15). Water aerobics. *Buzzle*.com. Retrieved July 16, 2010, from http://www.buzzle.com.
* Cain, K. (2012, June 29). The Negative Effects of Facebook on Communication. *Social Media Today RSS*. Retrieved January 3, 2013, from <http://socialmediatoday.com>.

OR numerically as below

All reference items must be in 10pt font. Please use Regular and Italic styles to distinguish different fields. Number the reference items consecutively in square brackets (e.g. [1]).

When referring to a reference item, please simply use the reference number, as in [2]. Do not use “Ref. [3]” or “Reference [3]” except at the beginning of a sentence, e.g. “Reference [3] shows …”. Multiple references are numbered with one bracket and separated with comas (e.g. [2], [2, 3], [4 – 6]).

Structure: First Author Last Name, First Author First Name.

[1]Author. (Date published if available; n.d.--no date-- if not). Title of article/book. *Title of web site* . Retrieved date. From URL.

[2]Author. (Date published if available; n.d.--no date-- if not). Title of article/book. Title of web site . Retrieved date. From URL.

**APPENDICES**

**Appendix A:**

Appendices: the Report must contain an appendix explaining file structure on thedata CD submitted with it. The appendix must also contain information on how thecode should be run. Other appendices may include documents such as: the projectproposal; a selection of experimental data; schedules; testing strategy; riskmanagement plans; glossary; manual; etc. Don't include the source code as anappendix (submit it on CD; see below). Don't include voluminous appendices (theseshould also be submitted on a CD). A report template can be found in the collegewebsite.

**Timeline/Milestones (Gantt Chart)**

This course is similar to self-study/research. Weekly meetings are scheduled with the supervisor for the project. Each student’s group will meet together weekly, keeping detailed minutes of the meetings.

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Task |  | Weeks | | | | | | | |
|  |  | 1-2 | 3-4 | 5-6 | 7-8 | 9-10 | 11-12 | 13-14 | 15 |
|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| 1. …….. |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| 2. …….. |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| 3. …….. |  |  |  |  | |  |  |  |  |
| 4. …….. |  |  |  |  |  |  | |  |  |
| 5. …….. |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| ……….. |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  | |